

February 17, 2016,

My name is Joshua Baldino, I live in East Haven, and I am testifying tonight to urge you to restore funding for tobacco control programs through the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund (THTF).

Cancer is dear to my heart not only because I am a survivor but because my grandfather, Grandpa Tom, passed away from lung cancer while I was being treated. My testicular cancer diagnosis came in August 2007 and led to multiple surgeries, two relapses, and metastatic disease; yet despite the aggression with which my cancer grew I am alive today. Grandpa Tom was not so fortunate.

Diagnosed with lung cancer with metastasis to his bones and brain shortly after I began treatment, his disease progressed rapidly and tragically. I watched my grandfather's disposition turn from jolly and happy to frail, weak, and solemn. I recall the radiation mask that Grandpa Tom wore when he went to the hospital for total brain irradiation, the cachectic expression that eventually consumed his face, and I recall my grandmother's sadness when he succumbed to his disease several months later.

Grandpa Tom had smoked cigars for many years and his cancer was undoubtedly the result of tobacco consumption. His unsuccessful battle against cancer is a sober reminder that tobacco products, whether cigarettes, cigars, chew, or else, can cause significant health impacts, particularly with respect to cancer. Furthermore, it is clear from public health data that nearly 5,000 individuals will die, just like my grandfather did, from tobacco use this year in the state of Connecticut. Not only does this incur a significant burden to our state's healthcare system to the mark of \$2 billion, but lives are lost when they otherwise might have been saved.

The CDC recommends that Connecticut spend \$32 million on tobacco control programs. Since the inception of the THTF in 2000, its coffers have been raided dozens of times, reducing or eliminating critical infrastructure necessary to prevent and reduce tobacco consumption. Today, it is proposed that \$0 be allocated to the THTF. I speak from personal experience when I say that this is unacceptable. It is a travesty to those who need the support, education, and inspiration to quit a deadly addiction. It is imperative that we continue to fund the THTF, an initiative that has empirically driven results and helps reduce the burden of tobacco-associated healthcare, including the prevention of deaths from tobacco consumption. I urge my representatives of my state, the state of Connecticut, to restore funding to the THTF so that my fellow citizens have access to the information and support they need to save their lives. Please do not allow my neighbors to pass in the manner that my grandfather did; it is horrible, tragic, and entirely preventable. Restore funding to the THTF and we will save lives.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.